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S E R M O N

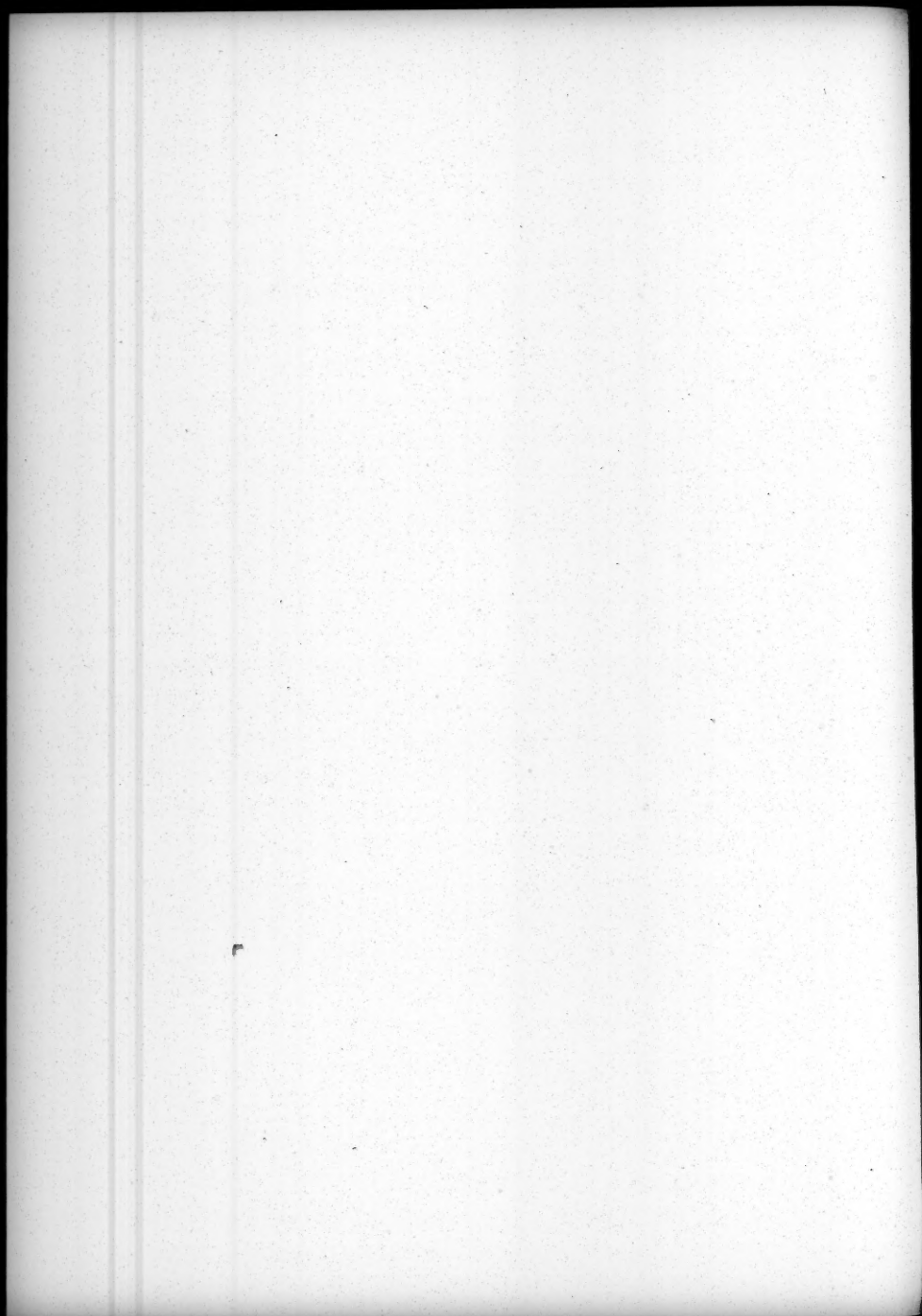
*Preach'd before the
University of Cambridge,*

At St. Mary's Church, on Sunday the
18th of May, 1701.

By  JOHN RYLAND, D.D.
Rector of Speldhurst, and Preacher at Tun-
bridge-well's Chapel in Kent.


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Dr. CORNWALL's
SERMON

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University of Cambridge.

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By JOHN NEWALL, D.D.
Rector of Spaldhurst, and Prebendary at
Exeter, &c. Chaplain in Honour.

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PROV. viij. ix.

They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

IN this Chapter *Solomon* brings in Divine Wisdom, in a very lofty and pompous manner, as making her personal Addresses to Mankind; and courting them with great Importunity, to entertain those safe and useful Precepts of Life she is going to administer. And that she might do this with more force of persuasion; she recommends them to mens serious Study and Application, from the real worth and excellency of them v. 6. as containing no trivial or common things; but such as are of the highest importance, and which all men are nearly concern'd to understand and embrace; from the undoubted Truth and Rectitude of them v. 7, 8. as being void of all disguise and falshood; which are founded upon the invariable Maxims of Justice and Righteousness; and able to furnish men with the best Rules of Wisdom in all the actions of human life. And in the words of my Text, from that inward Evidence and certainty they bring along with them, by which to convince all those, who seriously apply their minds to the Knowledge of them, that they are in all respects

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respects True and Just and Reasonable. *They are all plain to him that understandeth; and right to them that find knowledge.*

From which words I will lay down this Proposition, as the Subject of my ensuing Discourse. That the Doctrines and Laws of Religion, will appear to all unprejudic'd persons, who seek in good earnest to know and understand them, to have that clear and convincing Evidence in them; which shall fully satisfy their minds, both as to the Truth and Reasonableness of them.

Although men of perverse Minds, whose Judgments are violently sway'd and byas'd either by false Opinions, which blind their Reason in matters of Belief, or by vicious inclinations, which deprave and sensualize their Reason in matters of Practice; though such Persons, I say, may find occasion to quarrel with Religion, and raise unjust Cavils against it; yet they, who are endued with honest and ingenuous tempers of mind, and shew themselves sincere Lovers of Truth; who desire nothing more than to be rightly inform'd of their Duty, and upon such Information; are resolv'd with themselves, to live in the strict and conscientious performance of it; will soon discover such manifest clearness and certainty in the Doctrines and commands of Religion, as shall constrain them to acknowledge the Truth and Goodness, of them and persuade them, both how just and Reasonable they are in themselves; and likewise, that their own highest wisdom, as well as Interest, lies in the diligent practice and Observation of them.

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In handling this subject I will endeavour, *First*, to confirm and illustrate the Proposition I laid down.

Secondly, To draw some few Inferences from it.

First, I will endeavour to confirm and illustrate the Proposition I laid down, *viz.*:

That the Doctrines and Laws of Religion will appear to all Unprejudic'd persons, who seek in good earnest to know and understand them, to have that clear and convincing evidence in them, which shall fully satisfy their Minds both as to the Truth and Reasonableness of them. And this I shall endeavour to do in these following Considerations.

First, That those things which Religion requires of us, are such, as Reason her self, when she forms her Judgment aright, cannot but approve; or at most, cannot justly refuse her Assent to them.

Secondly, They have the concurrent Judgment and approbation of all Wise and Good men both as to the Evidence and Reasonableness of them.

Thirdly, That such persons, as have no unjust Prejudices against Religion prevailing in their Minds, will sooner be brought to Examine the Several Proofs and Testimonies of it's Truth and Divine Authority; and a fair Examination of these, will not fail of giving them Intire Satisfaction.

Fourthly, That they who fairly examine the Truths of Religion, and are dispos'd to embrace them upon sufficient Evidence, shall moreover have that Internal Illumination of God's Holy Spirit, which shall clearly discover the Excellency and agreeableness of them to their minds.

The first Consideration is,

That those things, which Religion requires of us, are such, as Right reason herself, when she forms her Judgment aright, cannot but highly approve; or at most, cannot justly refuse her Assent to them.

And this will appear, with respect both to the Practical commands and Duties of Religion, and likewise the high and Mysterious points of Faith belonging thereunto.

In the first of these, Religion commands us no other things, then what the light of Reason teacheth us, and gives it's Approbation to, as Right and Just in themselves. The Duties which seem to bear hardest upon human nature, are Repentance, and Mortification, Contempt of this world, Loving our Enemies; Suffering Persecution for Righteousness sake, and the like, which do all recommend themselves to our Minds by their apparent Reasonableness.

To shew this as briefly as I can.

Repentance is a Duty, which necessarily ariseth from
that

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that Relation in which men stand toward their Sovereign Lord and Maker; that when they have offended him, and violated those Laws which were given them as the Rule of their Obedience; they should Express their inward grief and sorrow for it, and seek his Pardon by sincere and unfeigned Repentance;

And though Repentance in its self be no sufficient Reparation to the Injur'd Authority and Justice of God, for the Breach of his Laws; (for which reason we find, that all the different kinds of Religious Worship among the Heathens had their various Rites of Expiation, and Sacrifices of Atonement, by which to appease the offended Deity) yet, it is so indispensable a Qualification in order to Pardon, that no man can in reason think, a Wise, Just and Holy God can ever become reconciled to sinful creatures without it, and restore them again to his Favour.

Had it been indeed possible for mankind to have perfectly recovered themselves out of their state of Degeneracy by Repentance, God might have pardon'd them, if he had so pleas'd, without any such publick satisfaction made to his Justice, as he hath now demanded. But neither the Justice, nor Holiness of God, will suffer him to pardon offending creatures without their Repentance, even when ample Satisfaction is now made to him for the Breach of his Laws.

Mortification is likewise a Duty, which Reason itself, if she would preserve her just Right of Government in the Mind, cannot but judge necessary and ex-

pedient; for considering the laps'd state and condition of human nature, there is no tolerable ease or comfort of life to be enjoy'd at present, much less, any proper and sutable degrees of Purity, such as may fit us for a better life after this, to be attain'd by us, unless we take care to keep all Irregular and Exorbitant Inclinations under absolute controul, and maintain that strict hand of discipline over them, which shall effectually curb and restrain them, when at any time they offer to rebel against our Reason. The Moral Philosophers universally complain'd of the great disorder human nature was under, that the lower Appetites of the Mind were broke loose from the command and government of Reason; and this put them upon the study of wise Rules and Precepts of Life, which might restore human nature to its first perfection, and place Reason upon her Rightful Throne again, by bringing down all those blind and impetuous desires, which often make such strong Resistance against her. Now Religion doth require no more of us then this, to mortifie all those unruly Lusts, which war against the Soul, which disturb it's present Peace and good order, and destroy it's future happiness and well-being; only with this Advantage, that what Philosophy was not able to perform, Religion hath made very easie to Us, in giving us Laws and Precepts of an higher Elevation; a perfect and consummate Example in our Lord *Jesus Christ*; more excellent helps and Attractives to invigorate our Endeavours; the supernatural Assistances of God's own Holy Spirit, and the sure Promises of Immortality and Eternal Life.

As for contempt of this world; It hath been all along esteem'd

esteem'd an Instance of Great and Generous Virtue, even by those, who only regarded the Quiet and Security of this present life; that a man may be able to keep his happiness in his own possession, and live out of the reach of uncertain fortune; free and unconcern'd amidst those various Contingencies of Life which so often disturb this busy scene of affairs here below; and if bare Philosophy could carry men thus high, sure Religion wil exalt them much higher; which gives us the certain view and Prospect of a better and more excellent state after this life; for which we are to prepare and perfect our minds at present, by disintangling our Affections from this vain world, which in a short time we must all leave behind us, and by placing them upon those divine and heavenly things, which will abide with us for ever.

The Duty of Loving our Enemies, wants, I think, no other Advocate to plead for it, beside the secret Testimony of every man's own breast, which yield him a wonderful Joy and complacency in himself, whenever he forgives an Injury, and bravely returns it by Acts of Kindness and Beneficence; and he that feeds his Revenge, seems not enough to consider his own case, that by giving scope to his Passions, he may the sooner stand in need of that forgiveness from others, which he himself hath once refused to grant.

Some indeed of the Philosophers allowed too much in the matter of Revenge; but others, with far more Reason, strictly forbid it, and wisely taught men to govern and suppress their Anger; to refrain from all Retaliation

liation of Injuries : and to requite the Wrongs of an Enemy by doing good to him. Religion hath only improv'd this Duty, and grafted it into a Nobler stock; by commanding us to love and do good to our Enemies, in Imitation of God himself, who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil ; and likewise, by way of return to that admirable Pattern of Love our Blessed Lord and Saviour hath shewed , in laying down his life for us, while we were enemies to God.

And as to the case of suffering for Righteousness sake, it is nothing so hard and unreasonable upon us, who suffer in the best cause in the world, the cause of God and Religion, and upon the best Interest imaginable, the Rewards of an heavenly Kingdom, as it was upon those men, who were taught to bear all the highest Sufferings of life, with unshaken Fortitude and Constancy, by the sole strength of Philosophy, without any of those extraordinary Motives and Assistances, which Religion now affords us, for our Encouragement and support under them. Great Sufferings were never thought unbecoming Wise and Good men, but always esteemed as manifest Proofs of true Magnanimity, especially when their sufferings beset them for a just and honourable cause : For men to die for their countreys good and preservation, hath in all Ages been celebrated with high Renown and Glory, and the bare name of Virtue, without any farther Reward, hath been held by some of no small figure in Philosophy, as an ample compensation for all the heaviest Evils and Calamities of this life, and surely the sufferings, which Religion brings upon us, are capable of a much fairer Account ; as being under-

undertaken for the Publick Honour of God, and Benefit of Mankind; for the Testimony of divine Truth its self, which the great Author of our Religion first seal'd with his own blood; for a good Conscience both in the sight of God and all Men, and for the hopes of a blessed Immortality, which shall at last crown and reward our Patience. Thus we see that those Practical Commands of Religion, which seem of all others the most difficult, have an apparent Reasonableness in them to recommend them to us.

And though indeed, we have not the same Clue of Reason to lead and conduct us through all the high Mysteries of our Faith; yet here also Reason will justify us in yielding a firm and uncontroverted Assent of Mind to them, as having such solid grounds of Authority to rely upon, for the Belief of them, which cannot possibly deceive us; an Authority sufficient, not only to satisfy all sober Inquiries, and resolve the doubts of tender minds, but likewise check the rude Attempts of bold and insolent Sceptics, who love to search into matters too high for them, and measure the most sacred Mysteries of Christianity, by the false Standard and Judgment of human Reason. For, I beseech you, what more just and reasonable, then to captivate our Understandings to the Unerring Wisdom of God, the Original source and fountain of Light; and pay an unreserv'd obedience of Faith to infallible Truth its self, in all those things which Divine Revelation hath made known to us? For granting, that these high Points of Faith have a depth in them, which we are not able to fathom, and are surrounded with dark and incomprehensible Mysteries our

shortsighted Reason cannot fully discover; yet if they appear to be plainly revealed by God, we have sufficient ground to believe them upon his bare Testimony, and may safely build our Faith upon the sure foundation of his sacred Truth and Veracity. We do willingly acknowledge, that in the Doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Resurrection of the body there is a profound and Mysterious darkness, into which no humane Eye can pierce; our understandings are swallowed up into an Abyss, and wholly loose themselves in searching them out: But after all, if these Doctrines have the publick Testimony of God himself to Vouch for them, and come to us upon the unquestionable credit of Divine Revelation, they are as infallibly true in themselves, as if we our selves were able perfectly to understand and comprehend them; for what are Mysteries to us, are none to the Infinite Wisdom and Understanding of God, who hath a full and clear Comprehension of all things: and if he please to require the Belief of such Doctrines at our hands, the Wisdom, and Goodness, and Truth of God signifie very little with us, if they do not make us believe him upon his own word and testimony: though the things themselves to be believed, may have insuperable difficulties in them, which our lame and imperfect Reason cannot explain.

And this will appear yet more Reasonable, if we consider, that only the plain and simple Belief of these Doctrines, is required of us: without being oblig'd throughly to comprehend them: this indeed had been a difficulty too hard for us, and which we might with some reason have complain'd of, under the present weak.

weakness and indisposition of our Intellectual faculties: But to believe them as they are propounded to us in Scripture, is no more hard, then to believe God himself upon his own word, and rely on his Truth and Veracity.

These Doctrines were intended for obedient and humble Believers, not vain Dogmatizers, who understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm: they are proper Exercisises of our Faith and Hope in God, not of our Wit and subtle Curiosity: and they believe best, who receive the Love of the Truth in an honest heart, and make it a Principle of all holiness and Virtue; not they, who are always raising new and impertinent Inquiries how can these things be? I would not be thought hereby to condemn all needful Explications of these Great and Venerable Mysteries of our Religion; the Essential Truths of Religion ought to be vigorously asserted and vindicated, as long as there are such men in the World, who openly deride and oppose them; who consent not to wholesome words, even the Words of our Lord *Jesus Christ* and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness: And such Explications will be always necessary, and of the last Importance to the Christian Faith; which serve to fence and guard it, against the Sophistry of spiteful and crafty Adversaries, who seek to undermine and subvert it.

Secondly. The Doctrines and Laws of Religion have the concurrent Judgment and Approbation of all Wise and Good men; both as to the Evidence and Reasonableness of them; who upon Experience find them such,

as may justly challenge their most stedfast Belief and Adherence of Mind; a Belief which powerfully influences their Lives and the whole course of their actions; makes them careful to please God, and obey his Will in all the most difficult Instances; and to converse in this present world, as it becomes those, who are sent hither, only to fit and prepare themselves for a better world to come. And the Judgment of these persons is in its self of great weight and moment, and ought to sway much with all those, who entertain any groundless prejudices against Religion; it being the Judgment of such, who are no way inferiour to other men in Point of Wisdom and Sagacity; who can reason and judge in all other Matters, as well as the Best; and who have not taken up Religion upon trust, (or out of meer fashion) but upon mature and deliberate choice, as having first considered the various Proofs and Testimonies of it with diligence and impartiality, and yielded to the powerful convictions of Mind arising from them; nay, of some among the Rest, who have been once led away with the common prejudices against Religion, and recover'd their just freedom again; who have known Wisdom and Folly, and skillfully chose the better part; and who can better judge of the ease and pleasure of true Liberty, then they, who have try'd the hardships and severities of a state of bondage, and escaped from them?

Now these Men not only know the Truth, but feel such a sensible force and power of it upon their Minds, as both enlightens their Understandings to discern its real Excellency, and gently bends their Wills to receive and

and embrace it. All its Doctrines discover themselves to their Minds with such light and certainty, as fills them with all joy and peace in believing; and all its Precepts appear so plain and Reasonable, as to make them consent to the Law as holy, and the commandment as holy, and just and good. So that their own Experience fully verifies those words of the holy Psalmist to them, in which he extolls the Divine Law for its great usefulness and perfection: *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they then Gold; yea then much fine Gold; Sweeter also then honey, and the honey-comb; Moreover by them is thy Servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.* And could we but once persuade those Men, who cherish any hard thoughts of Religion, to put themselves in good earnest upon the Exercise of a Virtuous and Religious course of Life, they would soon change their Opinion concerning it; and instead of finding that Repugnancy in its Laws, which before they imagin'd, reap so much pleasure and peace of Mind from the Observation of them, as would entice them to make a farther progress therein, without ever returning into the dark and troublesome paths of sin and folly.

'Tis their gross Ignorance of, and unjust prejudices against Religion, which create in them such hideous representations of it; but did they once acquaint them-

selves with God, and learn the knowledge of his ways, all the frightful Images of Religion would vanish in a short time, and their Minds become perfectly charm'd and captivated with the beauty of holiness.

They would then find, that Faith is no hasty and blind credulity, but a sober and rational Assent of Mind, built upon sure and solid Principles; such as others before them, even the wisest and best men have ventur'd their All for, and been content to sacrifice their secular ease and profits, and even life its self upon the certain truth and evidence of them.

Than which there can be no better Argument of their believing the Truths of Religion as certain, and being fully persuaded of them in their Minds, that when they have maturely weigh'd and consider'd, and form'd their Judgments concerning them, they should so far deny themselves, as to hazard (if I may be allowed to say so) their lives, and their Immortal Souls too, upon the Credit of them. Men have naturally a very tender regard for life; and if they believe a Future State, will have a much greater concern for their Souls; and therefore, when we behold such persons, who in all other Matters act with prudence and Understanding, to be so far influenc'd by the Principles of Religion, as not only to spend their Lives in one continued course of mortification and self-denial, with respect to the pleasures and safety of this life; but likewise put themselves upon the final Issue of another world, upon the Belief of them; we ought both in Reason and Justice to think, that their Minds were certain, and had an undoubted per-
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suaſion of the things they believ'd, which excited them to do and ſuffer in this manner for their ſakes.

Thirdly. That ſuch perſons, as have no unjuſt prejudices againſt Religion prevailing in their Minds, will ſooner be brought to Examine the ſeveral Proofs and Testimonies of its Truth and Divine Authority; and a fair Examination of theſe will not fail of giving them intire ſatisfaction. Nothing is more Undeniable, then that prejudice and Obſtinacy will effectually bar up mens Minds againſt the cleareſt and moſt important Truths: we daily ſee the mighty force they have upon Men, in common Matters of belief or opinion, as well as in Religion. When any thing is offered to them, which they have no mind to believe, either on account of ſelf intereſt, or ſome contrary Sentiments, which prepoſſeſs them; how fiercely will they contend in ſeeking to baffle the Credit of it, lay hold on every ſmall Circumſtance of Improbability, which ſeems to weaken its truth; diſparage the plaineſt Evidences brought to ſupport it; and at laſt with a ſullen ſtiffneſs wholly reject it, as a thing groundleſs and incredible. In like manner when men have brought themſelves to a ſetled averſion, and prejudice of Mind againſt Religion, either by corrupt Inclinations, or affected Scepticiſm; they will not admit her to an impartial hearing; they are ſo far under the power of an Evil heart of Unbelief, that they can't perſuade themſelves to examine things in a fair way; every frivolous Cavil and Exception is allow'd of againſt the truth, and weighs more with them, then all the moſt Subſtantial Proofs for it; which can be brought either from the plain dictates of reaſon, or the
more

more sure testimonies of Divine Revelation. And therefore when men once shew so much temper, as to be willing, to have the Evidence of truth lay'd before them, and patiently hear the Cause of Religion through that large Variety of Attestations, which may be alledg'd for her; they give great hopes, that they will in the end, determine their Judgments on the right side, and acknowledge the Truth, which is so mighty and prevailing.

This is all which Religion in her own just Right lays claim to; as having such ample Testimonies to produce, which will not fail to convince and persuade men, if they will but examine and judge of them with due application of Mind, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

This was the Method, our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Author and finisher of our Faith; himself us'd, by which to bring the Jews to the Belief of his heavenly Doctrine and Authority; he appeal'd to the consonancy of his Doctrine with their own Establish'd Law, and the numerous Testimonies in *Moses* and the Prophets, relating to his Person and manner of Appearance; his actions and sufferings. He alledg'd the Witness of *John* the Baptist, whom they themselves acknowledg'd for a true Prophet; the many uncontestable Miracles he daily wrought among them, by which, according to their own Law, true Prophets were to be distinguished from false ones. He submitted both his Life and Doctrine to their tryal, that as he taught nothing, but what made for the honour and worship of the one true God; So

he himself was innocent and unblamable in all his Actions; Void of all Secular Ambition, and worldly designs, and sought not his own Glory, but the Glory of him that sent him.

He bid them search the Scriptures, which by their own Confession, were at first given by Inspiration of God, that in them they might find, how all the several Types and Predictions concerning the Messias, were exactly fulfill'd and accomplish'd in him; and to name no more, he kindly admonish'd them to beware of all willful and malicious opposition against the truth; to banish all pride and vain glory, and the Extravagant Love of this world out of their Minds; and to act in all things with sincerity, and a just regard to God; and then they would soon be brought to acknowledge him for a Teacher sent from God, and yield an obedient ear to his Doctrine.

And by the like method, we must now endeavour to bring men over to the Belief of Religion; by laying down to them all the External Proofs and Evidences of its truth; in judging of which, if they proceed candidly and without prejudice, we need not doubt of giving them all the satisfaction; they can reasonably demand. To single out, for instance, one among the vast heap of Testimonies brought for the Christian Religion, I mean the Resurrection of *Jesus* our Lord from the dead, by which, the Application tells us, he was solemnly declar'd to be the Son of God; If this be true, nothing but pure malice its self, can resist the force and Evidence of it. All the contrivance and power in the

world could never have brought it to pass in confirmation of a false Doctrine taught by an Impostor, and therefore if it be once made appear, that our Blessed Lord, who, while he liv'd, frequently foretold his own Resurrection, and referr'd others to it, as the great Testimony of his coming from God, did really return to Life, after he was kill'd, and appear'd openly in his crucified body, notwithstanding all the caution us'd by the Jews to prevent and hinder it; which is capable of being prov'd to that high degree of Certainty, that 'tis scarce possible to suggest the least ground of suspicion to the contrary; I can see nothing wanting beyond this, to attest the Divine Authority of the Christian Doctrine, to all those, who sincerely seek after the truth, and are willing to embrace it.

Fourthly. They who fairly Examine the Truths of Religion, and are dispos'd to embrace them upon sufficient Evidence, shall moreover have that Internal Illumination of God's Holy Spirit, which shall clearly discover the Excellency and Agreeableness of them to their Minds. This indeed is no direct Proof of the certainty of Religious Truths, to any others, but those persons alone, who are secretly enlighten'd by God; yet thus far it may be us'd as a proper Argument to all men, that in case they will apply themselves with care and diligence to find out the truth, and are duly prepar'd to give it a welcome Entertainment: If they will but Examine things with an honest mind, and observe all those Means which are necessary to gain a true Knowledge of the Divine Will; they shall undoubtedly have the inward direction and guidance of the Spirit of Truth, to lead them

them into all truth; and find such heavenly light, coming down from the Father of Lights, as will both inform and convince their Understandings in all the Important Doctrines of Religion, and finish the work of Faith in them with power; and that in such a manner, as shall not only persuade them of their truth, but likewise discover the real futableness of them to their Rational Faculties, as things worthy of God to reveal, and which deserve all acceptation at the hands of men. Hence the Holy Psalmist tells us, *that God will guide the meek in judgment; and teach them his way; that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant*: and Solomon, that if we seek after Wisdom with the like diligence and Application, *that men search for hid treasures*, we shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; *for that the Lord giveth Wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and Understanding*; and one greater than Solomon hath said, *that if any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*. And this is a great Motive to excite mens diligent Study and Search after Divine Truth, that if they are not wanting to themselves in any necessary Endeavours to furnish their minds with the Knowledge of Religion, and refuse no means of instruction conducive to that end, God will not be wanting to afford those secret Irradiations of Spiritual Light and Understanding, which shall clear up their dark and ignorant Minds, and display the truth to them in it's full beauty.

I do not mean by this, that God will give them a full and Intuitive view into the great and Sublime Mysteries

of Religion, so as to see clearly through all the intricate Labyrinths of the Trinity or Incarnation; how the Divine Nature communicates its self to three different Subsistences, which together make but one God; or how both natures in Christ are so United, as to make but one Person. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.* But my meaning is, that God will communicate to us such a knowledge of these things, as our faculties at present are capable of receiving, such as shall thoroughly convince us of their truth and certainty; and create a steadfast adherence to them in our minds, and likewise Minister to all the purposes of holiness and a good life.

It now only remains to draw some few Inferences from this discourse.

1. Religion is very plain and intelligible to all those who are willing to understand it, altho' there are some deep Mysteries in it, which we are to believe, but cannot comprehend; and that for this Reason, because the Belief only, not the perfect knowledge or comprehension of them is required of us. So that if we can but give a good Account of our Faith, as to the main grounds and Evidences, upon which it stands; Faith will appear to be a wise and rational assent, though we cannot fully understand the Mysteries themselves believ'd by us.

Now it is impossible to give a better reason of our Faith, than the Authority of God himself who can no more require us to believe that which is false, then com-

command us to do that which is simply evil and unjust : and therefore how high soever the things themselves are plac'd above our Comprehension ; if they are plainly reveal'd , and the Belief of them required from us , we must say in this case ; *Let God be true , and every man a Lyar* ; and are under an indispensable Obligation of yielding up our unfeigned Assent to them. But are these Men in earnest , who would have us renounce all Mysteries in Religion ? some of themselves must then renounce , in pursuance of this Principle , one at least of their own darling Opinions , which hath far more Unintelligible Mysteries in it , than any they lay to our charge. That GOD should join himself to the humane nature , they will by no means allow , because they cannot apprehend how it should be ; but by a strange kind of Infatuation they can at the same time swallow down the belief of a mere man being made into a God , and do accordingly give him divine honour and worship , have put the Government of the world into his hands ; and acknowledge him for supreme Judge of the world at the last day : and is there no Mystery in all this ? that a man who had no Existence before his Conception in the womb , should be exalted to a God , who exists necessarily of himself , and from all Eternity ! Is there no Mystery in apprehending , how a finite nature can become capable of infinite perfections ? for without these he is in vain worshipped , is neither fit to govern , nor judge the world. So that they must either quit their own faith as unintelligible *Jargon* (to use their own Dialect) or leave us in the quiet possession of our Faith , which hath indeed its insuperable difficulties , but of the two , admits of a much fairer and more rational Account concerning them. Not

Not to shew at present, how the chief Principles of natural Religion (which others of them do so highly extol) as well as Reveal'd, will hereby suffer: For are there no Mysteries in forming a Just Idea of God, and of his unbounded Attributes and Perfections? Do our Understandings Encounter no difficulties in conceiving the Elaborate work of Creation? and are all the intricate Schemes of Divine Providence open to our full view and observation? or must we then give up these as absurd and irrational, till we have fully satisfied the reason of our minds about them?

2. We may from hence perceive the Great and almost Invincible power, which Prejudice and Disaffection to Religion, gain over the Minds of Men; in keeping them from embracing the Truth, though it come attended with all the Evidence and strength of Persuasion imaginable. All the External force and Violence, which can be employ'd against Religion, do not give such an effectual stop to its growth and propagation in the world, as that Opposition doth, which ariseth from an inward malicious temper of Mind in Men; especially in an Age overrun with Scepticism and Immorality. Against the one, Religion hath been able to bear up, by the wonderful meekness and patience, with which it inspires all it's followers: But nothing is able to baffle that obstinate Resistance, which mens affected Infidelity, their Pride and self-love, and above all, their Lusts and Evil habits, make against Religion.

The best Doctrine in the world, which hath the clearest Evidence to support it, and is attested with the

the most Irrefragable Proofs of its Divine Authority, will be rejected by Men thus dispos'd, and treated with open scorn and contempt at their hands: Even Light its self brings no Evidence to such mens minds, who *love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

3. It hereby appears, that the more men improve in the knowledge and practise of Religion, they shall arrive to higher degrees of Satisfaction and certainty of Mind concerning the Truths of it; for if they, who are only searching after the Truth with a willing and obedient mind, shall not want that Inward Spiritual Light, which shall discover it plainly to them; What strong and powerful Illuminations shall they receive, who after diligent Search, found out the Truth and embrace it, and give themselves up to its safe Direction in all their Actions?

The best men shall have the most Important Secrets of Gods Will communicated to them; and the more we excel others in sound Faith and love of the Truth, in purity of heart, and all Christian Virtues of Life; we shall find the Impressions of Divine Truth still more lively and Vigorous upon our Minds; giving us the highest degrees of Certainty concerning them, we are capable of in this present state. This is that *Plethophory* or full Assurance of Faith and Hope, the Scriptures mention; by which good men are so thoroughly persuaded of the Truths of Religion, as to believe and embrace them, without any the least doubt or hesitation remaining upon thir minds. And theis con-
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